

## **22D MEU(SOC) Transits Suez, Supports Humanitarian Effort in Djibouti, Begins Training in Kuwait**

Since my last update, the Marines and Sailors of the 22d MEU(SOC) have accomplished a great deal. We transited the Suez Canal, participated in a "Project Handclasp" community relations project for those less fortunate in Djibouti (a country on the east coast of Africa), offloaded to Camp Buehring, Kuwait, and commenced sustainment training. We also had a visit from martial arts legend and TV/movie star Chuck Norris and the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Magnus.

The Marines and Sailors of the MEU, upon completion of port visits in the Mediterranean, set sail once again and conducted a lengthy transit through the Suez Canal. It took nearly an entire day to traverse the 100 miles of the canal, which crosses the Isthmus of Suez and links the Red Sea and the Gulf of Suez with the Mediterranean Sea. Your Marine or Sailor was afforded the opportunity to go topside on the deck of the ship to take in the Egyptian scenery. It was very interesting to experience the desert landscape as we moved past, to include towns and cities, sand dunes, and the continual rise in temperature.

Upon completion of the canal transit, we stopped off the coast of Djibouti to offload eight pallets of humanitarian supplies destined for a local orphanage, an AIDS clinic, a women's center, and several schools for children. The supplies were provided through an organization called Project Handclasp, a people-to-people program that accepts and organizes transportation of educational, humanitarian and goodwill materials overseas. These supplies are distributed by U.S. military personnel to needy recipients around the world. Sewing machines, clothes, toys, and hygiene and medical supplies were distributed by Marines and Sailors of the 22d MEU(SOC) and the Kearsarge Strike Group to representatives of the local agencies listed above. Our Marines and Sailors enjoyed the opportunity to exercise their citizenry skills, extend good will to those less fortunate, and strengthen relations between the United States and the people of Djibouti.

We subsequently continued through the Gulfs of Aden and Oman before transiting the Strait of Hormuz into the Arabian Gulf. We since have offloaded personnel and equipment in Kuwait and commenced sustainment training at Camp Buehring and the Udairi Range Complex. As the name implies, sustainment training affords your Marines and Sailors an opportunity to hone their expeditionary mission essential skills in preparation for any potential operational tasking.

Marines are quickly learning how to deal with the heat, dust and sand inherent to the desert environment. However, our accommodations are not as austere as you might imagine. Your Marines and Sailors are billeted in large, semi-permanent, air-conditioned tent structures. Camp Buehring includes several dining facilities, Post Exchanges, barber shops, gyms, laundry facilities and chapels. There is a USO, a Starbucks Coffee shop, and Burger King and Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurants to bring us a small taste of home.

While we continued our offload from shipping and prepared for sustainment training, we observed the sixth anniversary of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center. These were events which will be forever etched in our hearts and minds as a nation, and the camp held a small ceremony to remember the brave souls who lost their lives on that day. The event served as a simple reminder that the world has changed, and it underscored the quintessential role your Marine or Sailor plays in protecting and preserving our way of life. It also reflected well the sacrifices you, our friends and family members, have been called upon to make in support of our efforts to serve our nation. You have adapted to being without your loved ones for long periods of time, adjusted your routines to address daily tasks at home without our assistance, and kept the fires burning on the home front in preparation for our return. We are very proud of you, too, and immensely appreciate your efforts on our behalf. Your faithful contributions at home keep your Marine or Sailor focused on their duties, and

as their Commanding Officer, I know this is critical to allowing them to safely and effectively execute their assigned tasks. I thank you and look forward to your continued support.

In my last update, I mentioned how proud I am of our Marines and Sailors, and it is a point that I will continue to stress. They continue to greatly impress me with their selfless dedication, enthusiasm and loyalty. They are true representatives of the values that many of you have helped instill in them, and they continue to distinguish themselves as noble ambassadors of the United States.

## **KEEPING INFORMED**

Please remember, this web remains your best source of information on 22d MEU(SOC) activities. It will be updated regularly with stories and photographs of your Marines and Sailors.

You can also access our 24-hour hotline by calling 1-877-817-7322 (toll-free) or 910-451-8780 (Jacksonville, N.C. area) and pressing the number '4' at the prompt.

All official and factual information regarding the 22d MEU(SOC)'s movements, activities, and operations will come directly from me via this web site ([www.usmc.mil/22ndmeu/](http://www.usmc.mil/22ndmeu/)), the MEU hotline, or the Key Volunteer Network. Other sources of information may be incorrect.

As always, we appreciate the sacrifice you make for us on a daily basis. I extend my warmest regards to you and yours. Semper Fidelis, and God bless all of you.

Sincerely,

Douglas M. Stilwell  
Colonel, USMC  
Commanding Officer